

## by Robert Brinton

**H**E talked about the King Biscuit Blues Band, his old landlady, Stevie Wonder and Peter Green, America, how he hasn't got a real home or steady girl to come back to, getting into slide guitar, but most important—and where everything eventually led back to—"probably the most ripped-off band in the country."

At 22, Ted Turner has already done more than most young guys ever dream about—and he knows it. Three very fast years is all that separates him from virtual obscurity, a one-roomed flat at the back of the Roundhouse somewhere, and being a quarter of Wishbone Ash—one helluva band.

As you read this, Ted Turner and the other members of Wishbone will be in America, just beginning their fifth tour of the country. They haven't cracked things over there quite yet, but that's what they're out to do. This tour or the next.

Point is, Wishbone have just got better and better, no fuss, no bother, just improved like a distance racer who finds he can go a bit further each time.

From that first album, through "Pilgrimage" to "Argus" the progress of the band has been nothing short of drastic, but nothing's been easy. Wishbone started out as a working band and they've stayed with it to become an ace working band.

And, despite the success, Ted Turner is the one member who's done the least talking. His approach to the music business is basically to get on with it, get on stage behind his Gibson Les Paul Custom and play.

## Carried away

And there are times, he admits, when he just gets carried away. "I'm up there," he said, "and it doesn't become a conscious thing anymore. I do get into my playing very much, so much, I don't know what's going on around me. But if it's not going too good, I'll want to lay back and try to get something going with the band, if you know what I mean?"

Indeed, anyone who's seen the band this year will know exactly what he means. Although he's moving more nowadays, Turner's frequent stage procedure has been to root himself to a spot, stand, then deliver, often merely a slight lip movement or rock of the head, as he gets behind the notes.

When we met I asked Ted if he'd take the road back to his early influences and how he came to move from his Birmingham home to join up with the other members of Wishbone in London.

It didn't appear a chore. "When I was younger I used to go and see people like Peter Green and Mick Taylor. They were the ones I really liked at the start and who had the most effect—seeing them made me want to play, I suppose."

Back in Birmingham, Ted joined a blues-based outfit, the King Biscuit Blues Band—the stay was shortlived though. He quit the band when he saw an ad in a music paper that a guitarist was wanted for a London band.

"When I first came down I was pretty raw and naïve, I suppose. It was quite a challenge because Martin and Steve, who I did the



audition with, had both been in bands before and this was only my second.

"When we got going something just seemed to work well from the start," he added.

"You know," he continued, "when the band was only starting to get going we were all living together in this small flat at the back of the Roundhouse. We had this great landlady—that's where the song 'Lady Whisky' comes from."

When Wishbone formed, the idea of dual lead playing had hardly been exploited by any British band. But the climate has changed and Turner is quite concerned that Wishbone have never been fully credited with getting the movement going.

He puts it like this: "We didn't realise quite how we sounded at the start, it's just something that developed because Andy's playing and my own seemed to complement so well."

"I think before us there was another band—Blossom Toes—who did use double lead. Then, after about six months when we got off, someone came up and told us about the Allman Brothers who were into a similar kind of thing. It wasn't that incredible, I'm not trying to make out anything like that, someone had got to get into it sooner or later."

"But now I reckon we're the most ripped-off band in the country. Everybody's at it. All the

time now people are coming up and saying there's a new band who sounds like us. Most of the stuff I've heard some of these bands doing though, has sounded very stiff and sterile."

Turner's not the kind of guy to be bitter, or go out and force acclaim upon himself and the band. If his words do look strong in print it's simply because they were spoken in a matter-of-fact, credit-where-credit's due manner.

Having little experience before joining Wishbone and also being a rather intense and down-to-earth individual, Ted indicated he has found the fast rise of the band, something of a strain.

"Since we started we haven't had one holiday—and what I find terribly depressing right now is having nowhere to live that I can call my own. See I've been living over at my manager's place—but it's not the same."

## Losing touch

"I haven't even got a steady chick. And, you know, you really need some sort of base to come back to, especially after you come back from America. It's alright meeting new people all the time and travelling, but there's been times I've felt I was losing touch."

"If you know what I mean, it feels like you're missing out on something. When we're over in America it would be great just to get around and meet some different people, 'cause really it's only hotels—these Holiday Inns, I suppose you've heard about them. Then on to the gig and back to the hotel. I don't get time to see anything."

"It is true what everybody says, the bigger the success the worse it gets and the more you've got to cope with," he went on, seriously. "I've come to a point in my life now where I've achieved almost everything I ever wanted, or set out to do. Every ambition I had when I was young is now about fulfilled so it's time for a re-think..."

"I could never understand before what people were on about

when they talked about being near a nervous breakdown—but, you know, I've got to that now. I can understand what they must feel like."

Turning from touring and America, I asked Ted what kind of music he was personally listening to now. Soul music, especially some of the material coming out of Motown like Stevie Wonder's "Music Of My Mind" album, was high on the list.

Also the guitar work of Neil Young. Although, Turner doesn't consider Young a technically brilliant player, he considers the emotion and force behind what he puts down on electric more than makes up for whatever's lacking.

"You immediately know whether a guitarist has got emotion or not, it's the same as a photographer or anything you'd like to take. A person can have the most expensive equipment and another can have the cheapest camera out. But it doesn't make any difference if the love and emotion isn't behind it."

Following on, did Ted feel that Wishbone gives him scope to fulfil himself musically. "Oh, there's such a lot we haven't got into yet and so much I'd like to do. Wishbone hasn't been exploited fully yet, I would like to hear the band play with brass sometime in the future."

"Also, I'm getting really into playing slide now." But recording is one thing altogether. What we still love best is going out to gigs and getting in front of an audience, that's what we started out doing and still are."

Finally, I wondered whether Wishbone now felt the need to push themselves into the singles market now that the climate has changed somewhat.

"Say," asked Ted, "did you see Pete Townshend the other night on television 'cause he about summed the whole thing up. He said how he felt like making and writing singles sometimes because of things like Alice Cooper bringing the spirit back again, but then he looked at the chart again only to see people like Cassidy and Donny Osmond—that says it all really."

# Wishbone—the most ripped off band in the land

TED TURNER (LEFT) AND (BELOW) MARTIN TURNER (RIGHT) AND ANDY POWELL

